



# Dominguez Canyon Wilderness

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*"A wilderness...is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."*

**-- Wilderness Act, 1964**

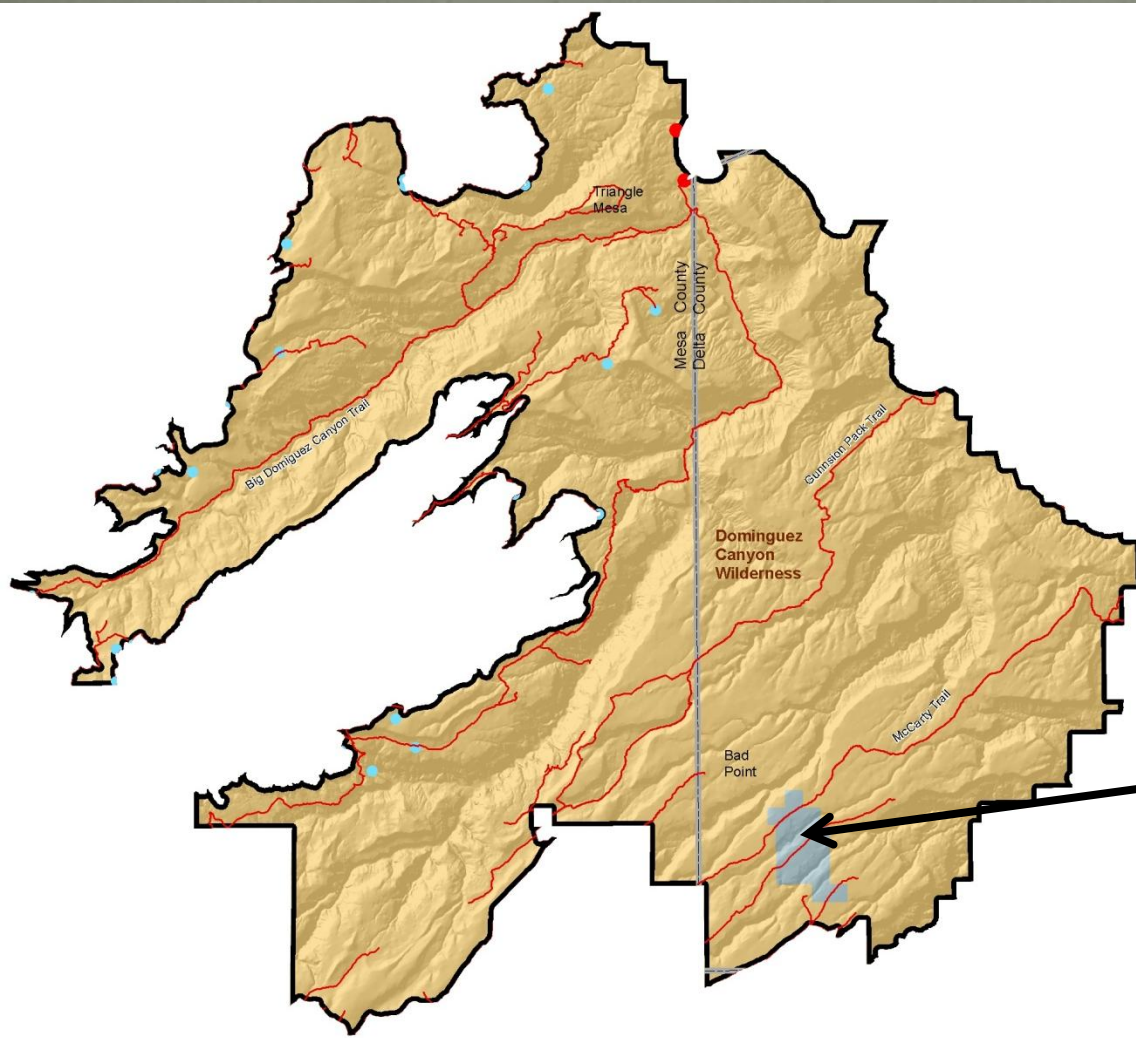
# Key words in Wilderness Act

(c) A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are **untrammeled** by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of **undeveloped** Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to **preserve its natural conditions** and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) **has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation**; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) **may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.**



# Dominguez Canyon Wilderness

## At A Glance



The Dominguez Canyon Wilderness is characterized by large mesas dissected by deep red slick-rock canyons, perennial water and arroyos.

BLM land is 66,193.2 acres.

State land is 638 acres.



# Two Wilderness Inholdings














## Rambo Homestead

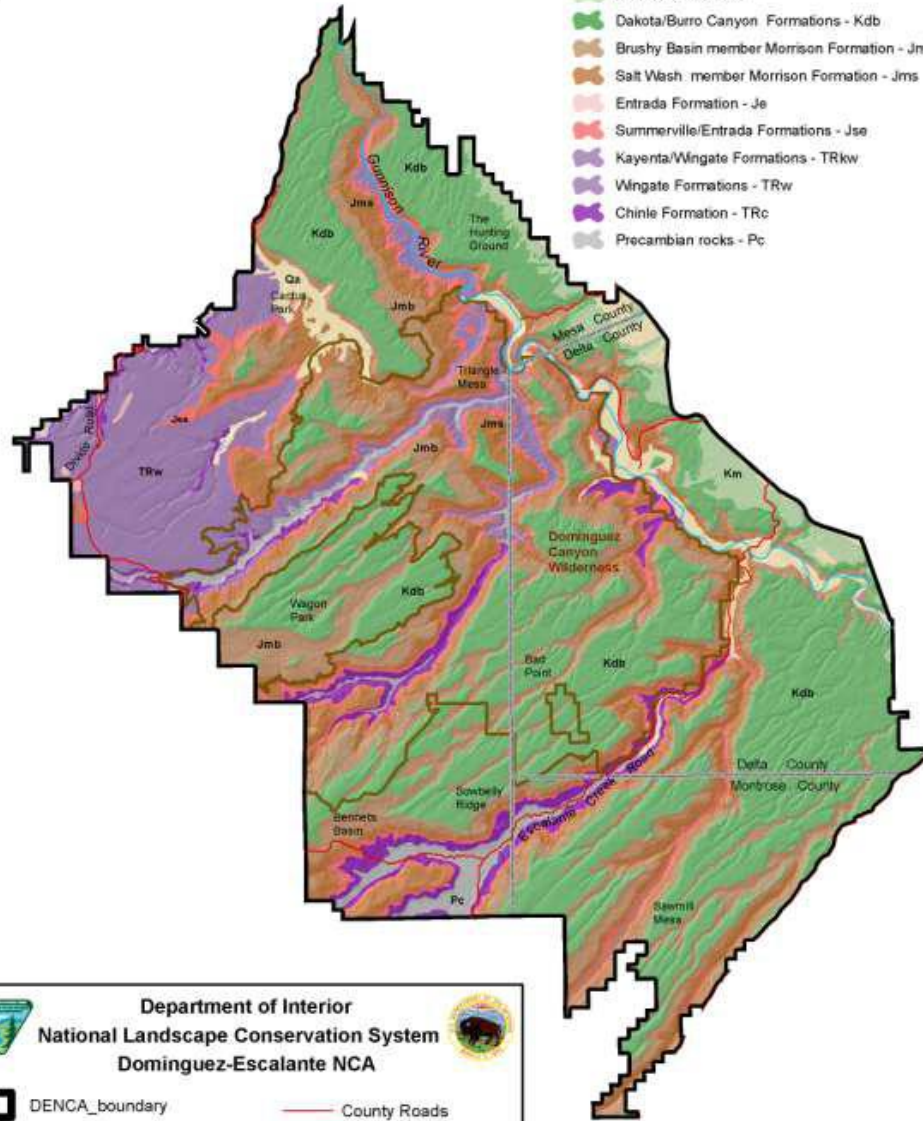
The Billy Rambo Homestead in Little Dominguez Canyon consists of an old house, an outbuilding, old farming implements, ranching and farming supplies. The property the homestead occupies has been deeded to BLM

The **Colorado Division of Wildlife** has a 640-acre parcel on Sowbelly Ridge, Tatum Ridge, and Camp Ridge. There is very little threat of further development of this area.



### D-E NCA Geology

-  alluvial/colluvial deposits - Qa
-  Mancos shale - Km
-  Dakota/Burro Canyon Formations - Kdb
-  Brushy Basin member Morrison Formation - Jmb
-  Salt Wash member Morrison Formation - Jms
-  Entrada Formation - Je
-  Summerville/Entrada Formations - Jse
-  Kayenta/Wingate Formations - TRkw
-  Wingate Formations - TRw
-  Chinle Formation - TRc
-  Precambrian rocks - Pc



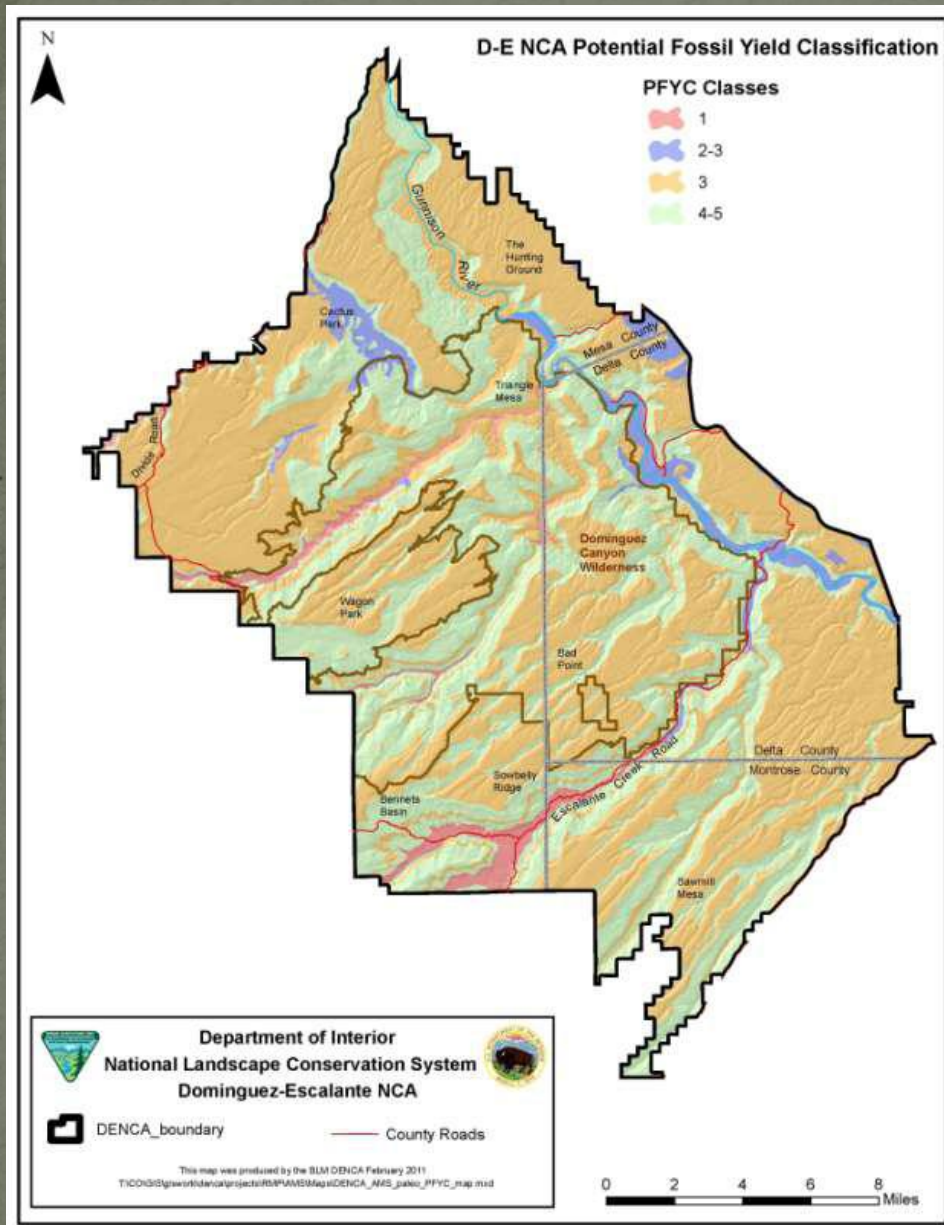
This map was produced by the BLM DENCA February 2011  
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# Wilderness Geology

The mesa tops are predominantly the Dakota/Burro Canyon Formation.

Canyon walls reveal layers of the Morrison, Entrada, Kayenta, Wingate, Chinle and to the Pre-Cambrian formation on the canyon floor. The Pre-Cambrian rock is up to 1.8 billion years old.

Between the Pre-Cambrian and Chinle is the "Great Unconformity" -- a billion years of missing rock formations.



# Paleo Potential

The Wilderness has moderate to high, to very high potential for fossil sites, particularly in the Morrison and Chinle formations.



Dinosaur fossil in the Morrison Formation, Dinosaur National Monument





## Excellent water quality in Wilderness streams

Creek	Miles
Big Dominguez Creek	15.9
Little Dominguez Creek	15.6
Dominguez Creek	0.72
Rose Creek	0.9

100 percent of monitored streams  
within the Dominguez Canyon  
Wilderness (31.24 miles) are in properly  
functioning condition.

# Wilderness Instream Flows

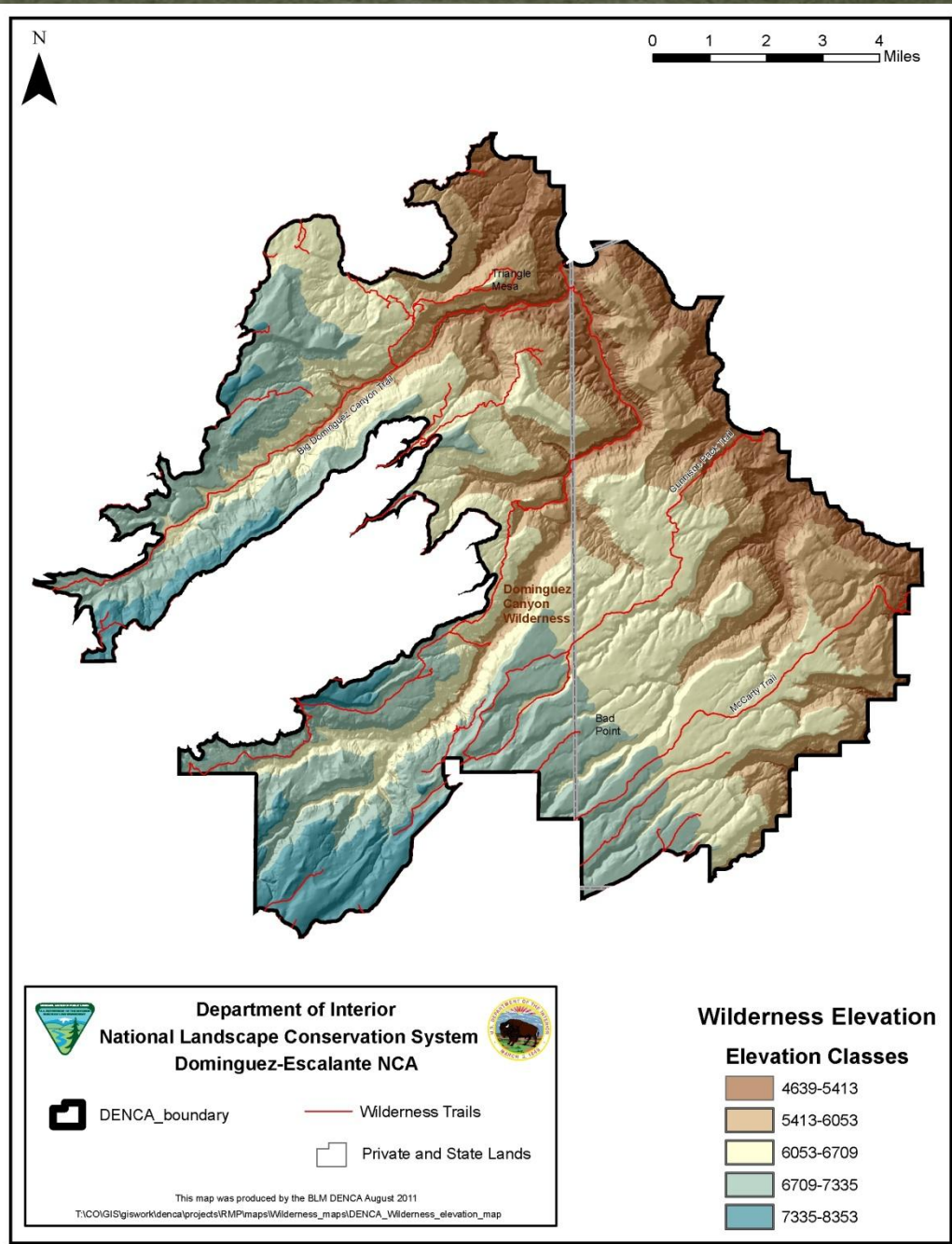
Flows	Big Dominguez	Little Dominguez
<b>Base Flows</b> (typically July through February)	<b>1.53 to 3.86 cfs</b>	<b>1.20 to 2.15 cfs</b>
<b>Snow Melt Runoff Flows</b> (typically March through June)	<b>75 cfs</b>	<b>65 cfs</b>
<b>Annual Flood Flows</b> (typically short-term thunderstorm events July through Sept.)	<b>250 cfs</b>	<b>200 cfs</b>
<b>Less Frequent Large Flood Events</b> (thunderstorm driven events recurring on 3 to 10-year interval)	<b>725 cfs</b>	<b>500 cfs</b>

- ❖ Flows vary greatly throughout the year.
- ❖ Instream flow appropriations (currently working through water court) recognize the importance of these seasonally-variable flows to natural and wilderness values.
- ❖ Would appropriate all water (above a certain development allowance) to wilderness and natural values.

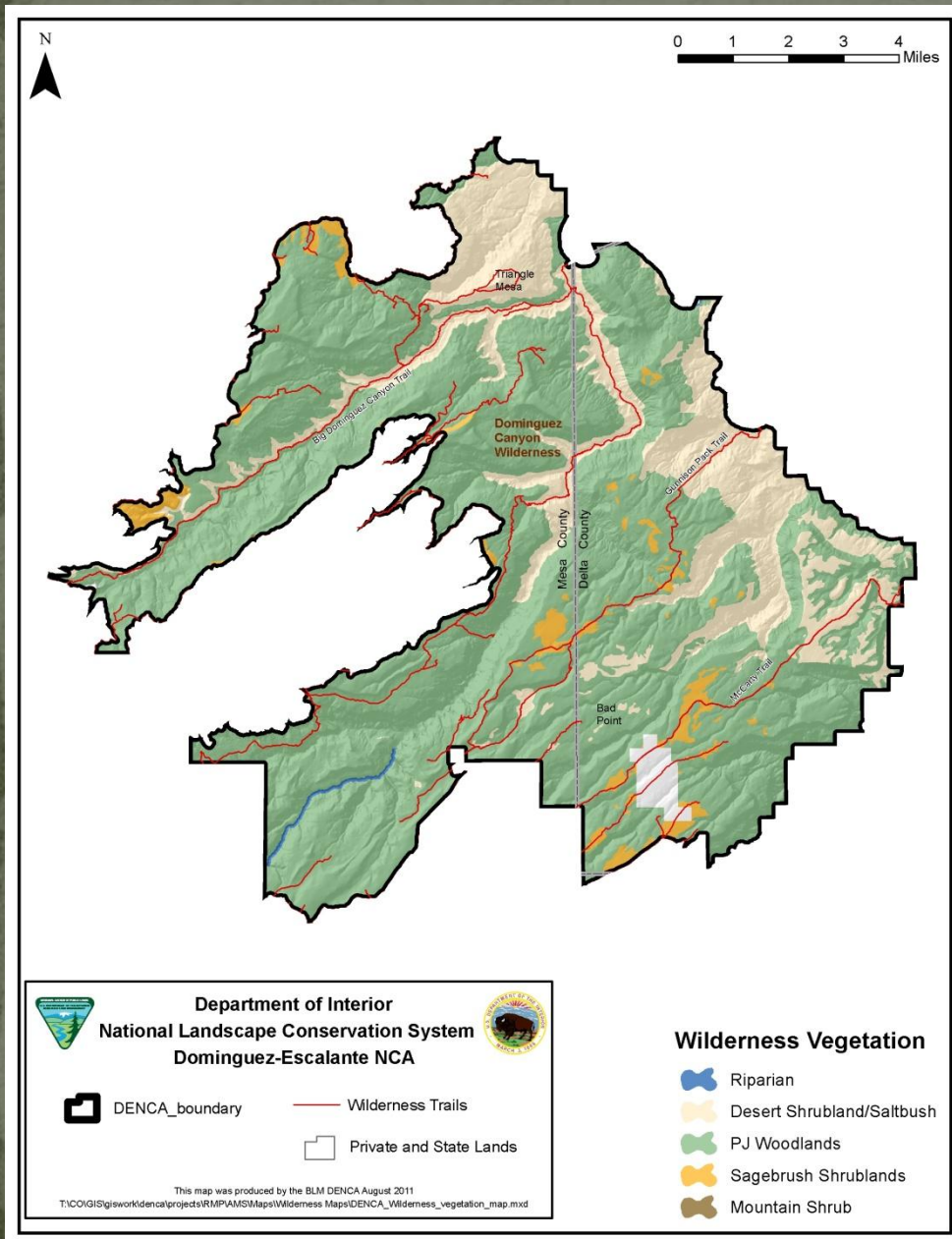




Ecosystems range from upper Sonoran piñon-juniper desert along the Gunnison River, to Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine, to aspen forests in the higher areas of the national forest.



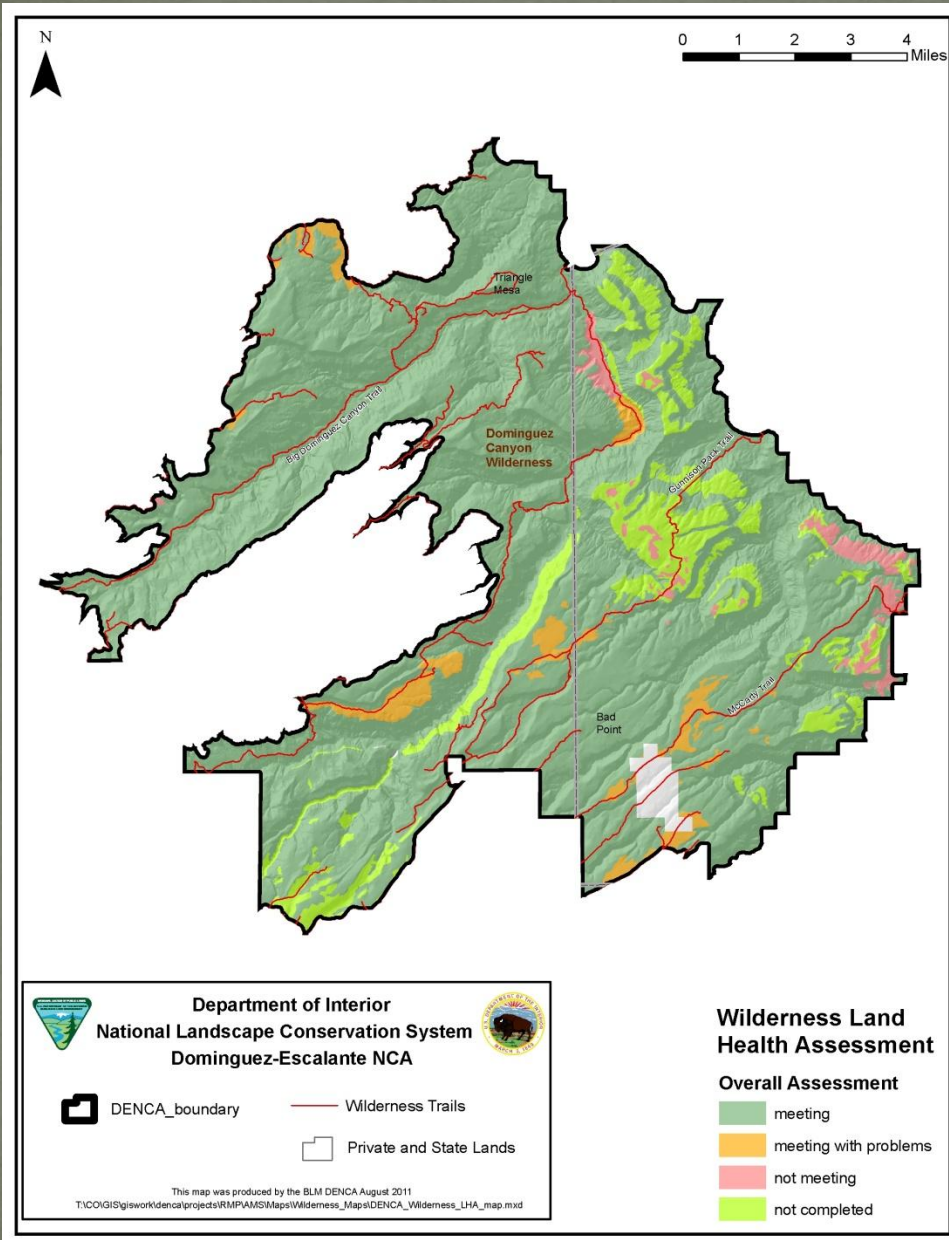




# Vegetation

Piñon-juniper woodlands, desert shrubland/saltbush, sagebrush shrublands and mountain shrub communities characterize the wilderness.





# Vegetation meets health standards

Most of the wilderness is meeting land health standards.

The few areas not meeting are Little Dominguez Creek (grazing and wildfire) and McCarty Bench (decline in grasses and increase in decadent sage brush).

# Sensitive Plant Species in Wilderness Area



Colorado hookless  
cactus – Threatened  
listing under  
Endangered Species  
Act

Grand Junction  
milkvetch -- BLM  
Sensitive Species

Naturita milkvetch --  
BLM Sensitive Species



Priority Species or Vegetative Community	Current Rating
Sagebrush Shrublands	<b>Fair</b>
PJ Woodlands	Very Good
Seeps	Good
Riparian/Wetlands	Very Good
Desert Shrub/saltbush	Good
Aquatic Systems	<b>Fair</b>
Colorado hookless cactus	Good
Desert bighorn sheep	Good

Planning for Priority Species and Vegetation (PPSV) is a methodology to organize biological data and analyses and inform decision making during RMP planning.

## Aquatic Systems

The Wilderness was judged to be in fair condition because of the following:

1. Lack of native trout
2. Lack of spawning access to Big and Little Dominguez Creeks
3. Excessive concentrations of selenium.

## Sagebrush/ shrublands

The land health of the Wilderness was judged to be in fair condition because of the following:

1. Unbalanced ratio of grass to shrub to forb.
2. Sagebrush communities do not provide sufficient habitat for sage grouse, which require sage cover between 10-30 percent.
3. Overabundance of the non-native crested wheatgrass, which reduces the biological diversity and ecological value of the community.



# Wildlife Wonders

Species include the collared lizard, desert bighorn sheep, **mountain lions**, golden eagles and peregrine falcons.





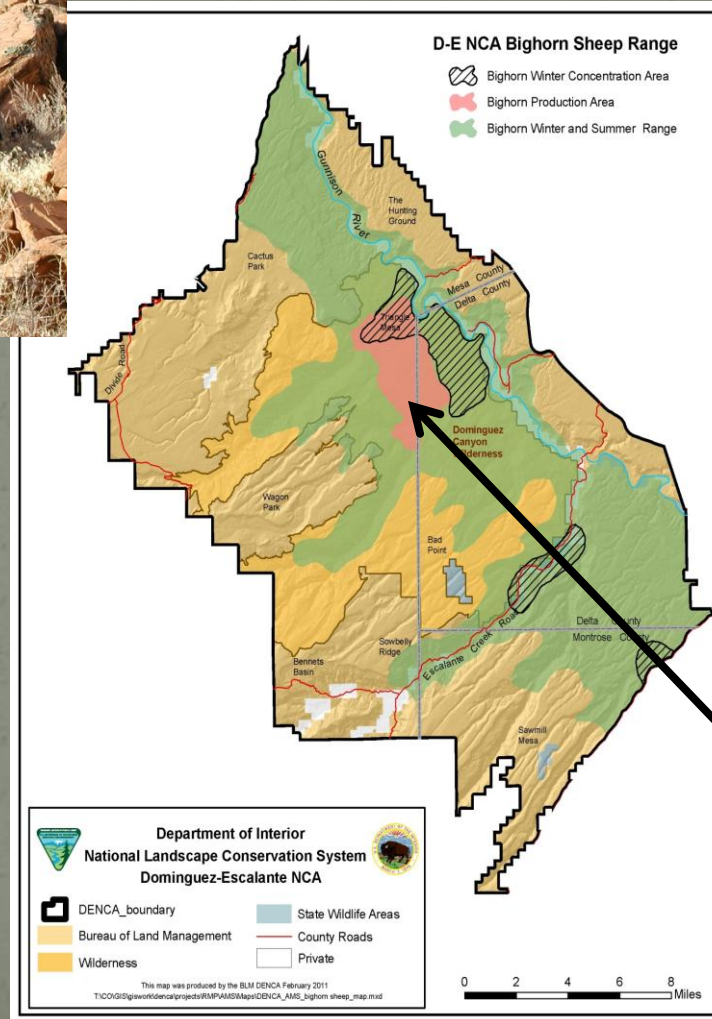


Proximity to domestic sheep and goats in the NCA is a concern. Mr. Rambo keeps 10-20 goats.

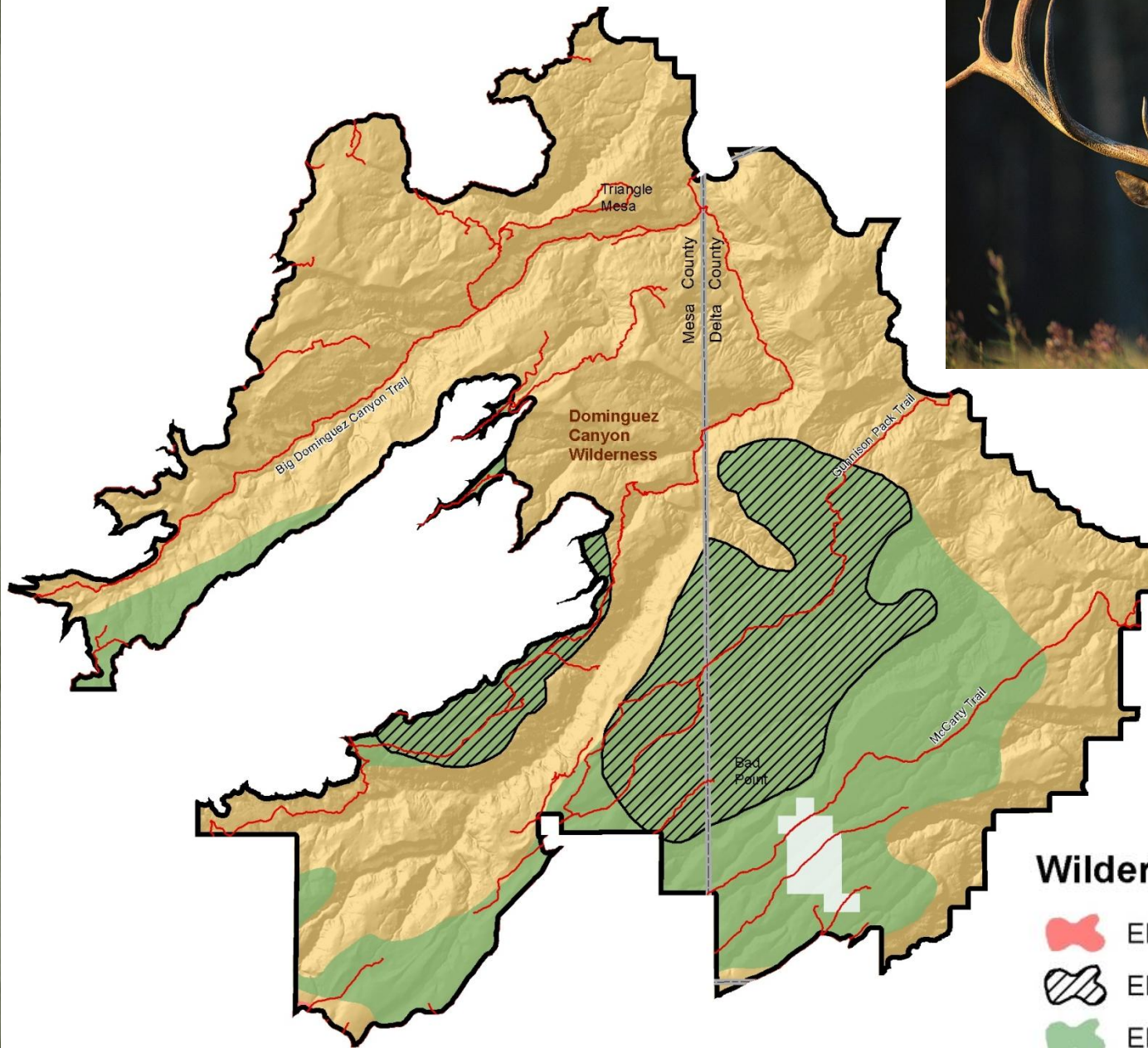
# Desert bighorn sheep

Desert bighorn sheep were released into the Big Dominguez Creek drainage in 1983 (10 sheep from Arizona), 1984 (10 sheep from Arizona), and 1985 (21 sheep from Nevada in two transplants).

**Lamb production** is in the Wilderness, notably Triangle Mesa and Star Mesa.










Wilderness  
provides  
critical  
winter  
habitat for  
elk.

### Wilderness Elk Ranges

-  Elk Production Areas
-  Elk Winter Concentration Area
-  Elk Severe Winter Range



# Cultural Sites

Only five percent of the Wilderness has been surveyed by archeologists.

This Ute rock panel shows a man on a horse.

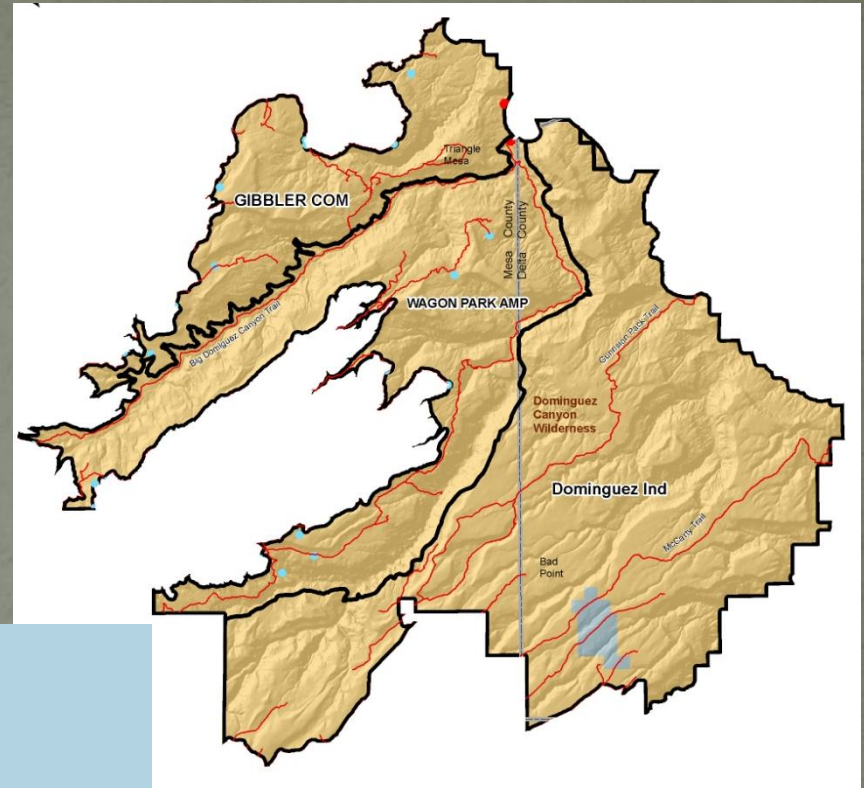




# Wilderness and livestock grazing

Grazing “shall” be allowed to continue in the Wilderness, and new livestock water developments “may” be built, according to the terms of the 2009 Omnibus Act.

There are three grazing allotments in the Wilderness, held by two local ranchers.



~1,620-2,120  
AUM

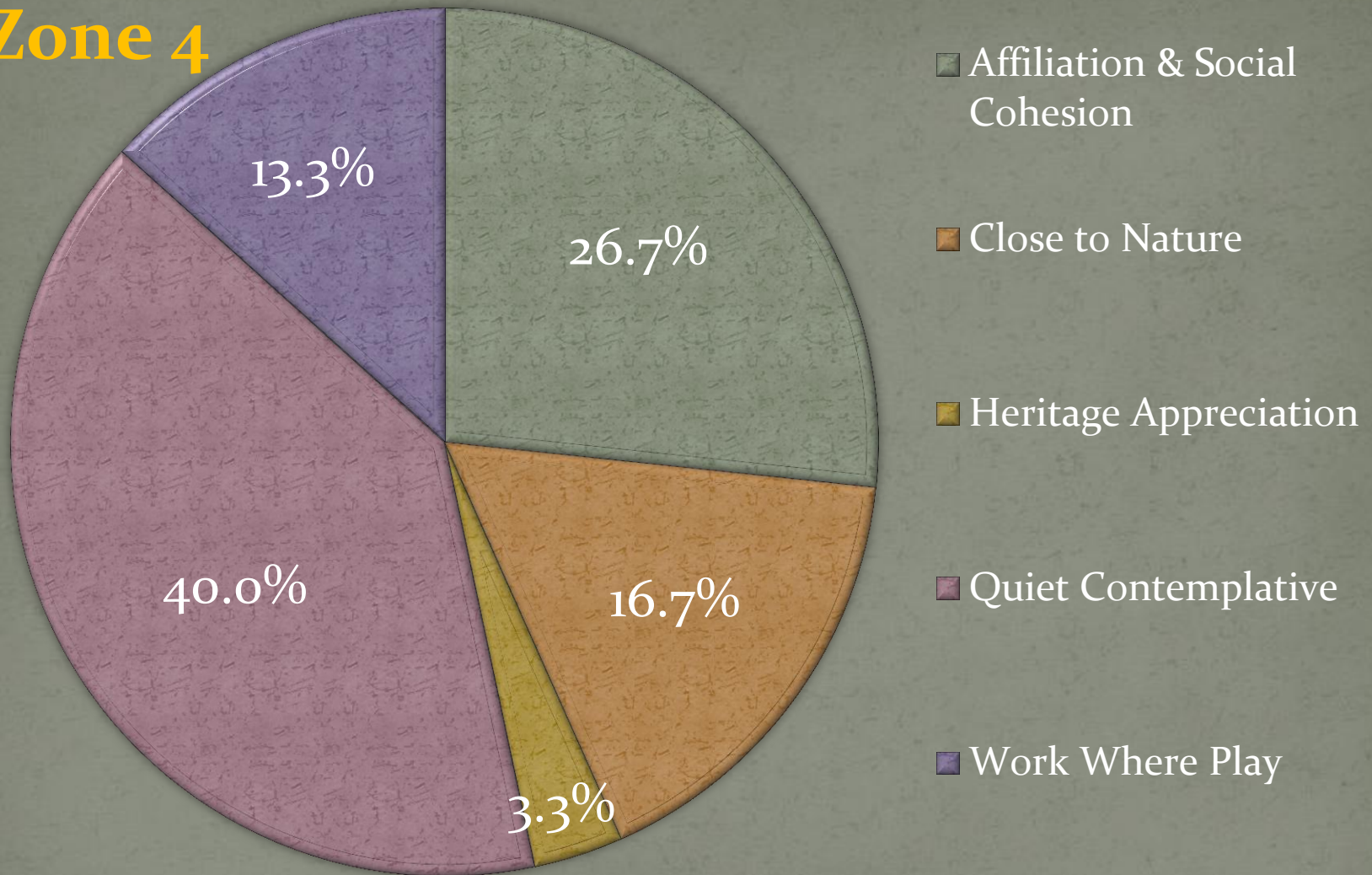


# Wilderness Recreation

The Wilderness is strictly non-motorized and non-mechanized, so the primary recreation activities will be hiking and horseback riding.



## Zone 4



Natural Resource Land Policy Institute (recreation visitor preference survey)

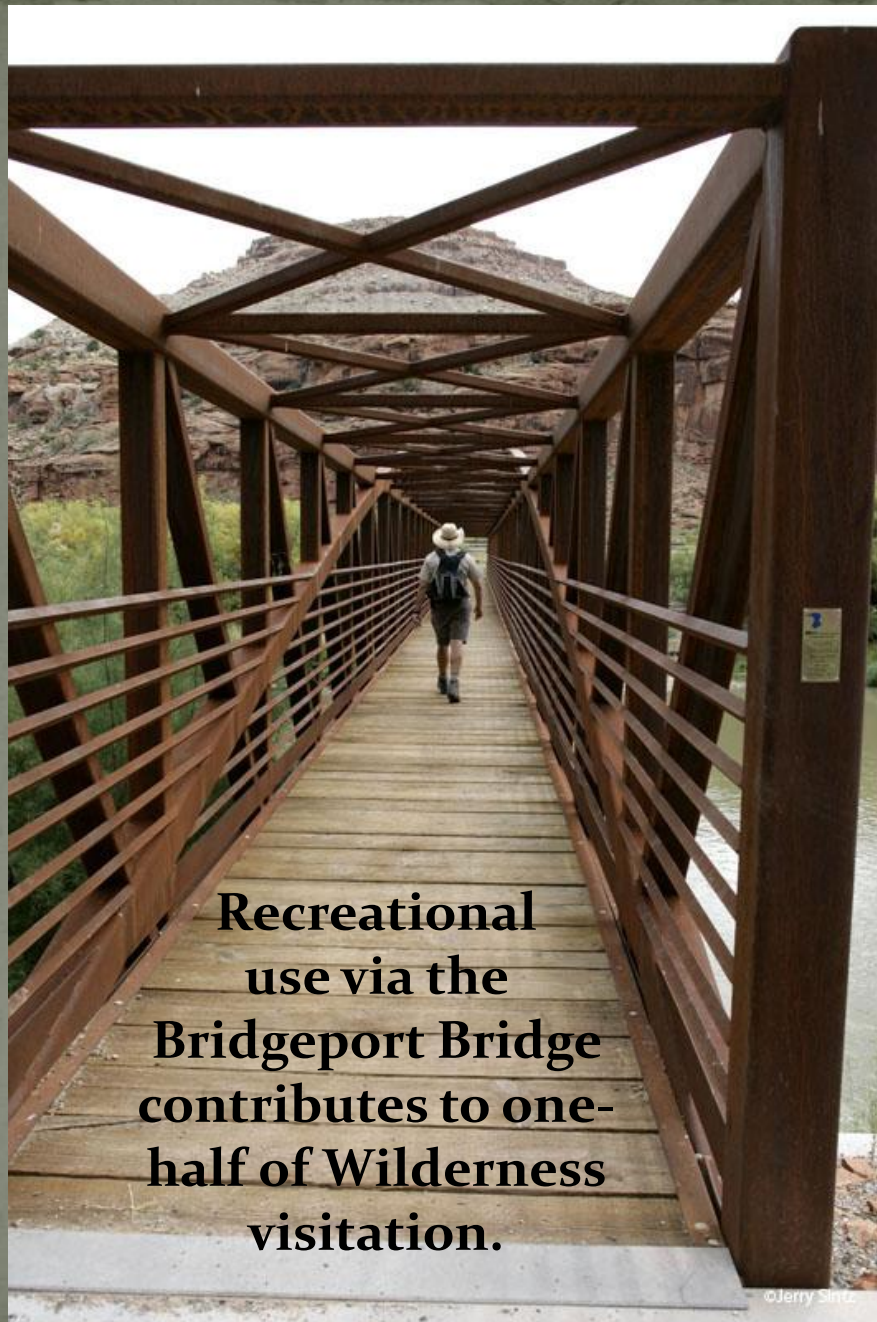


# Wilderness Access

BLM estimates  
9,500 Wilderness  
visits annually.

**Recreational  
use via the  
Bridgeport Bridge  
contributes to one-  
half of Wilderness  
visitation.**

The Bridgeport bridge is the most popular point of access. There are five other recreation access points to the wilderness: Cactus Park, Dominguez Campground, Gunnison Pack Trail, McCarty Trailhead, and the mouth of Dominguez Canyon.





# Day Use Only

This day use area is closed to camping, due to resource/visitor conflicts. In the past, campers have left trash, fire rings and human waste.

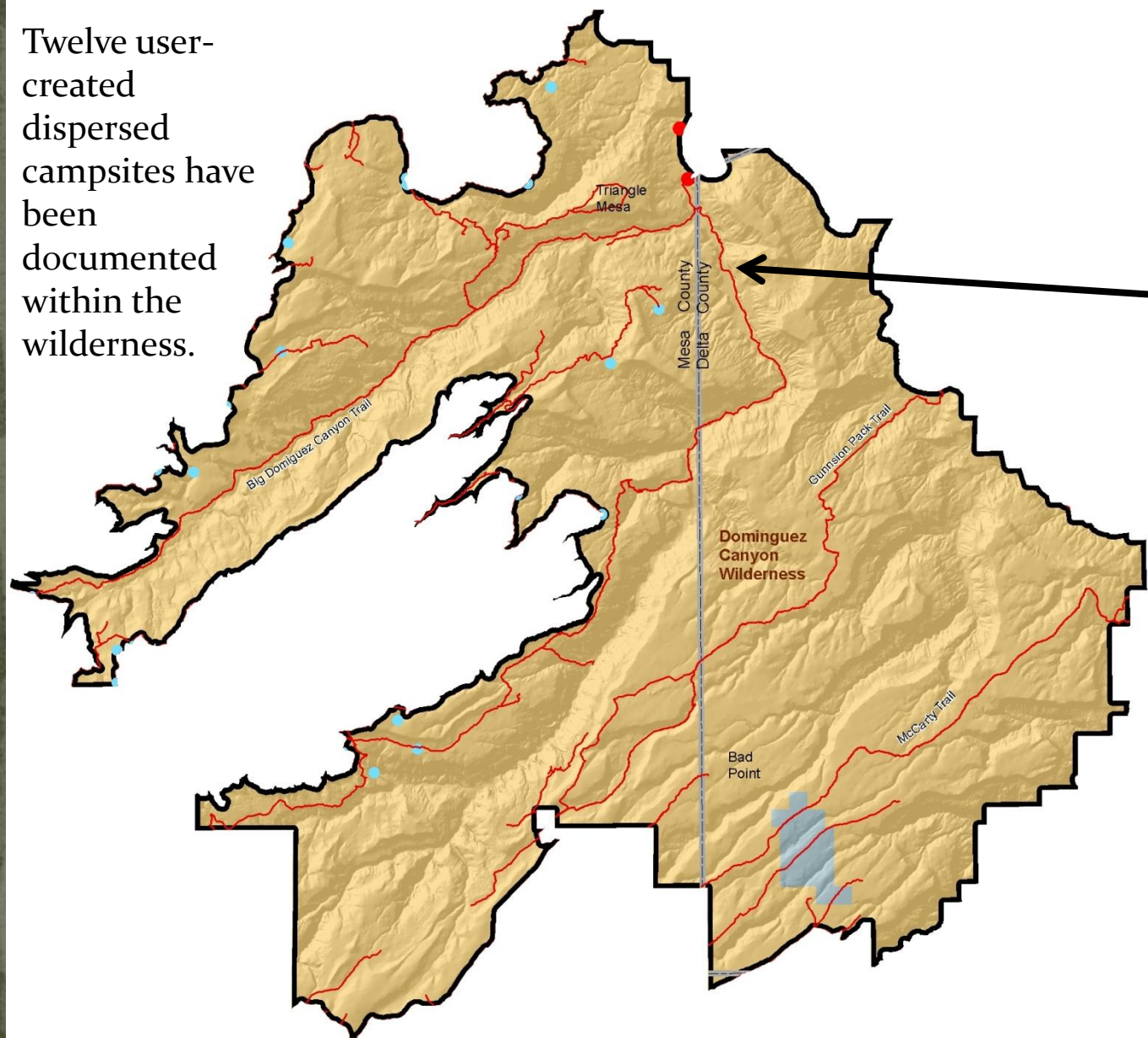
Since the area was closed to camping, such problems have diminished.

The most popular attractions are the waterfall and a nearby rock panel.

Camping was also banned along Little Dominguez Creek, which is the Billy Rambo property.



Twelve user-created dispersed campsites have been documented within the wilderness.



## Wilderness Routes

101 miles of routes within the wilderness.

33 miles of these routes are former roads (with evidence of construction)

45 miles are old two tracks

22 miles are singletrack routes.



# Wilderness Planning



What wilderness values are most important? How do we want the wilderness to be managed? How do we want it to look and function in 25 years?



# *“Keeping It Wild”*

The Interagency Wilderness Character Monitoring Team includes:

- Department of the Interior
- Bureau of Land Management
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service
- U.S. Geological Survey
- the U.S. Forest Service

Offers an interagency strategy to monitor trends in wilderness character across the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Team Monitors five Wilderness Qualities:

- “Untrammeled”
- “Natural”
- “Undeveloped” and
- “Solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.”
- Unique and supplemental values

Quality	Indicators
<p><b>Untrammeled—</b> Wilderness is essentially unhindered and free from modern human control or manipulation</p>	<p>Actions authorized by the Federal land manager that manipulate the biophysical environment.</p> <p>Actions not authorized by the Federal land manager that manipulate the biophysical environment.</p>
<p><b>Natural—</b> Wilderness ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization</p>	<p>Status of native biological communities</p> <p>Abundance and distribution of non-native species</p> <p>AUMs of livestock within the wilderness</p>





Quality	Indicators
<p><b>Undeveloped—</b> Wilderness retains its primeval character and influence, and is essentially without permanent improvement or modern human occupation</p>	<p>Non-recreational structures, installations, and developments</p> <p>Inholdings</p> <p>Use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, or mechanical transport</p>
<p><b>Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation—</b> Wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation</p>	<p>Amount of visitor use.</p> <p>Remoteness from sights and sounds of people inside the wilderness</p> <p>Remoteness from occupied and modified areas outside the wilderness</p> <p>BLM and user-created recreation facilities</p> <p>Management restrictions on visitor behavior</p>

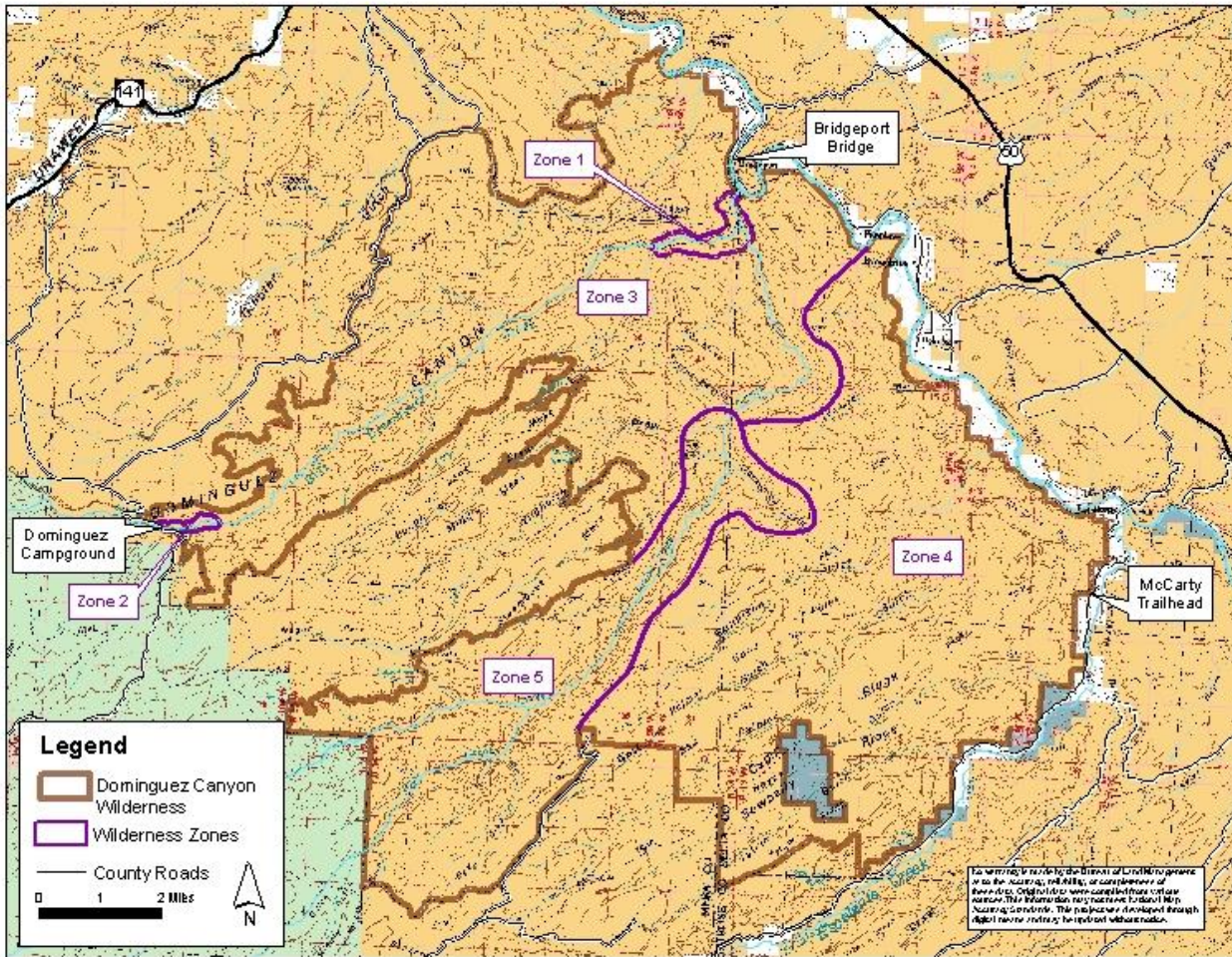
Quality	Indicators
<p><b>Unique Values –</b> Cultural resources and species that are on the threatened or endangered species list.</p>	<p>Condition of cultural resources, and threatened/endangered species.</p>





 Delta  Grand Junction	Low	Medium low	Medium	Medium high	High
Untrammeled					
Naturalness		 			
Undeveloped					
Opportunity For Solitude			 		
Opportunity For Unconfined Recreation					
Unique Values					

# Wilderness Area Zones



## Zone 1: mouth of Big Dominguez Canyon

Zone 2: adjacent to Dominguez campground

## Zone 3: Triangle and Star mesas

## Zone 4: Camp Ridge, Gunnison Pack Trail

## Zone 5: Little Dominguez Canyon





Value	Delta	Grand Junction
Untrammeled	3	0
Naturalness	0	5
Undeveloped	0	0
Opportunities	5	0
Unique Values	0	1

## Survey of Most Important Wilderness Values

Delta citizens feel both the Wilderness and people should be left alone. In contrast, the Grand Junction focus group puts a priority on naturalness and unique values.



# Questions for Advisory Council

Is there other information BLM should consider? If so, what?

What should the range of alternatives be for the wilderness?

What values should be emphasized in the different alternatives?

Should we have different zones to emphasize different values?

What should the range of alternatives be for livestock water development?



Wilderness Values		Low	Medium low	Medium	Medium high	High
Untrammeled 						
Naturalness 						
Undeveloped 						
Opportunity For Solitude 						
Opportunity For Unconfined Recreation 						
Unique Values 						

“We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope.”

– *Wallace Stegner*

